

# CONVENTION ON THE CONSTITUTION PUBLISHES REPORT ON REMOVAL OF THE OFFENCE OF BLASPHEMY FROM CONSTITUTION

## SIXTH REPORT OF THE CONVENTION FORMALLY LAID BEFORE HOUSES OF OIREACHTAS

**Monday, 27 January 2014:** The Convention of the Constitution has today Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> of January published its report on the removal of the offence of blasphemy from the Constitution. The report recommends that the offence of blasphemy is removed and replaced with a new general provision to include a prohibition on incitement to religious hatred. The report also recommends creating a new set of detailed legislative provisions to include incitement to hatred on a statutory footing.

The recommendations of the report, which has been formally submitted to the Houses of the Oireachtas, will be considered by the Government who have undertaken to respond within four months.

The Convention of the Constitution considered the removal of the offence of blasphemy from the Constitution in November 2013. Members of the Convention heard presentations by academics and legal experts on the blasphemy provision, covering its origins and historical context, its development over the years, what it was intended to do and how it operated in Ireland and how it relates to the existing legislation, specifically the Defamation Act 2009. Members also heard evidence from various interest groups on either side of the issue including Atheist Ireland, the Humanist Association, the Irish Council of Civil Liberties, and the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland.

The report can be downloaded at [www.constitution.ie](http://www.constitution.ie)

Speaking today the Chairman of the Convention of the Constitution Mr. Tom Arnold said, “Today’s report is the sixth report that the Convention has laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the members of the Convention for the commitment they showed to the discussion and I look forward to the response of the Government within 4 months”.

**Ends //**

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**Notes to Editor**

The Convention on the Constitution was established by Resolution of both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Its purpose is to consider and deliberate on eight separate matters on which it will make recommendations [as possible future amendments to the Constitution] and report to the Houses of the Oireachtas

For its part, the Irish Government has undertaken to respond to the Convention's recommendations within four months by way of debates in the Oireachtas and where it agrees with a particular recommendation to amend the Constitution, to include a timeframe for a referendum. The Convention is to complete its work within 12 months. Each topic will be deliberated at a weekend meeting of the Convention